

History

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission was formed in 1963, when guarantees against discrimination were added to the 1963 Michigan Constitution. The Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) was established by the Legislature in 1965 to provide staff needed to implement the policies of the Commission. The Department enforces the state's civil rights laws through five service options: information, referral, outreach and education, mediation, and complaint resolution. MDCR has the authority to accept complaints based on unlawful consideration of religion, race, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status or disability in the areas of employment, education, housing, public accommodations or public service (government). In addition, complaints are accepted based on unlawful consideration of height, weight, and arrest record in employment.

Common Questions from Teens

I recently applied for a job at a local restaurant. On the application, it asked my race. Is this legal?

Generally, it is illegal for employers to ask about a person's race. However, federal law does allow certain employers to ask about an applicant's race to collect data for federal reports, if the applicant voluntarily wants to provide it. Employers can't force applicants to identify their race. Employers are also prohibited from making pre-employment inquiries into other areas protected by the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act and Persons With Disabilities Civil Rights Act. MDCR has a Pre-employment Inquiry Guide available by mail or on its web site which answers many questions related to job interviews.

My girlfriend and I tried to enter a local dance club. We were told that we had to be 21 years of age to enter. Is this legal? Could I file a civil rights complaint?

The Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act defines age as "chronological age," therefore, there is a legal basis for MDCR to accept a civil right complaint from any person regardless of their age. However, your age may limit your ability to lawfully participate in certain activities or enter certain establishments due to other state laws and local ordinances. As you know, there is a state law related to the consumption of alcoholic beverages, and your community may have a local ordinance implementing a curfew for teens.

I'm on a girls' softball team at my high school, and the baseball diamond for the boys is much nicer than the softball diamond. Is my high school unlawfully discriminating?

This could be considered gender discrimination under the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, and may also be a violation of federal law called Title IX. If this has happened, you can come to MDCR and file a complaint. Generally, girls and boys should have equal facilities and equal opportunity to the same sports.

A guy at my school has really been pressuring me to have sex with him. I've told him that I don't want to, but he keeps leaving obscene notes in my locker, putting his arm around my shoulders, and staring at my chest, Is this sexual harassment?

There's a good chance that it is. Usually sexual harassment occurs between adults, but Title IX and the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act prohibit sexual harassment of students by other students (or teachers). Teasing or flirting is generally **not** sexual harassment unless it is so severe and unwelcome that it creates a hostile environment that hinders your ability to participate in your school's activities. You should immediately discuss your situation with your parents, a teacher, or counselor at your school so they can intervene if necessary.

If you feel you have been subjected to illegal discrimination, it is your right to contact the Michigan Department of Civil Rights at 1-800-482-3604

TTY users can also access 313-961-1552 (Detroit) and 517-373-1104 (Lansing)

You can also go to the Web Site for information at www.mdcr.com



Civil Rights Answers for Teens